

Message Text

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USIA FOR SADLIK, IEU

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TAGS: PFOR CZ LE US

SUBJECT: PROTEST OF CZECH MEDIA TREATMENT OF U.S.

REFS: A. PRAGUE 233 B. PRAGUE 252

1. POL COUNSELOR CALLED ON NOVOTNY, DEPUTY HEAD MFA'S SIXTH DEPARTMENT, MORNING FEBRUARY 2. FOLLOWING LINE SUGGESTED REF B, HE LINKED DISCUSSION TO DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SPACIL'S COMPLAINTS TO CHARGE ON U.S. MEDIA TREATMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. NOTING THAT GENERAL TENOR OF CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA TREATMENT OF U.S. WAS HARDLY CALCULATED TO HAVE POSITIVE EFFECT ON EFFORTS TO MOVE OUR RELATIONS FORWARD, POL COUNSELOR SAID HE SPECIFICALLY WANTED TO PROTEST ROVENSKY'S ARTICLE IN JANUARY 29 RUDE PRAVO (REF A) AND RADIO PRAGUE JANUARY 10 BROADCASTING WELCH ASSASSINATION. IN ADDITION TO UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS RE CIA ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON, WE FOUND ROVENSKY'S PERSONAL ATTACK ON AMBASSADOR GODLEY EXTREMELY OFFENSIVE. AS CHARGE AND SPACIL HAD RECENTLY DISCUSSED VOA AND RFE, HE MENTIONED MINARIK PRESS CONFERENCE AND TV APPEARANCES ONLY BRIEFLY.

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2. IN REPLY, NOVOTNY TOOK LINE THAT CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA IN

GENERAL ONLY PICKED UP WESTERN PRESS REPORTS ON CIA ACTIVITIES, (WHICH HE NOTED WERE PLENTIFUL), BECAUSE THEY OBVIOUSLY HAD NO INDEPENDENT ACCESS TO CIA SECRETS. WHILE HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH RADIO PRAGUE BROADCAST ON WELCH ASSASSINATION, HE STATED THAT IT SOUNDED TO HIM LIKE SPECULATION, AND "SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY." MINARIK, HE SAID, WAS ONLY SETTING FORTH "FACTS"; BEST WAY TO AVOID MINARIK-TYPE PUBLICITY WOULD BE TO ABOLISH RFE.

3. POL COUNSELOR RESPONDED THAT INDEED CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA HAD PICKED UP NUMEROUS STORIES ON CIA FROM WESTERN MEDIA, AND THAT WE HAD NEVER PROTESTED PUBLICATION OF THESE STORIES. HOWEVER, GENERAL LINE OF ROVENSKY ARTICLE AND KRAL'S

ALLEGATIONS THAT CIA HAD ENGINEERED WELCH ASSASSINATION HAD NEVER--TO HIS KNOWLEDGE--APPEARED IN WESTERN MEDIA. WHILE AGREEING THAT KRAL'S THESIS WAS ONLY SPECULATION AND THAT SUBSTANCE DID NOT DESERVE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, POL COUNSELOR STATED THAT USG MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY THE BROADCASTING OF AN ALLEGATION THAT IT HAD ENGINEERED THE ASSASSINATION OF ONE OF ITS EMPLOYEES.

4. NOVOTNY PROMISED TO REPORT CONVERSATION TO HIS SUPERIORS, AND STATED THAT HE WOULD ALSO SEE THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE AT RUDE PRAVO AND RADIO PRAGUE WERE INFORMED.

5. COMMENT: NOVOTNY SEEMED, IF NOT EMBARRASSED, AT LEAST UNCOMFORTABLE, ESPECIALLY AT PERSONAL ATTACK ON GODLEY AND KRAL THESIS ON WELCH ASSASSINATION. HIS PROMISE TO BRING MATTER TO ATTENTION OF RUDE PRAVO AND RADIO PRAGUE AUTHORITIES, WHICH IS NOT USUAL IN OUR EXPERIENCE, COULD BE INDICATION THAT AT LEAST SIXTH DEPARTMENT FEELS MEDIA MAY IN THESE INSTANCES HAVE OVERSTRETCHED EVEN THEIR USUALLY ELASTIC BOUNDARIES.
PERRY

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